Stephen Reeves 9/15/10

Writing 105 Summary

In “Beholding” Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (the author) observes that people naturally tend to stare at things that are different, either something that is beautiful or at that something that Susan Sontag would call a “repulsive” attraction (Thomson 199). Thomson tells the story of Harriet Johnson and Matuschka, both of whom had “repulsive attractions” and encouraged people to stare at them. Johnson had a rare muscle disease that eventually led to the curvature of her spine into an s-shape. In 2003 Johnson was on the cover of the New York Times magazine and she explained how she was full of life and was enjoying herself. People not only couldn’t believe she was on the front cover, but she was enjoying life. Johnson explained in the interview that she wanted people to stare at her because she believes that when people “see her as unremarkable in her distinctiveness, she makes it possible to identify with her own aliveness” (Thomson 203). This is a big step for Johnson because she to be accepted by society the only way for that to happen is if society becomes used to seeing her. Matuschka was a woman should here scars to the public for the same reasons Johnson did. Actions like these make a big impact in the disabled community. This is because it shows people in the community to be out right with their disability and not be ashamed.

With people like Johnson and Matuschka disabled people are becoming more confident in society. Senator Max Cleland, Congressman Jim Langevin, and New York State governor David Patterson are all successful in government and all have disabilities. When people are forward with their disabilities it leads to a more enriched life as demonstrated by Harriet Johnson and Matuschka.